

U.S. PATENT APPLICATION

for

**APPARATUS AND SYSTEM FOR FACILITATING CHILD
DISCIPLINE**

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APPARATUS AND SYSTEM FOR FACILITATING CHILD DISCIPLINE

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

[0001] The present invention relates generally to child discipline systems and devices. More particularly, the present invention relates to an apparatus and system for facilitating child discipline.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0002] For generations, parents have sought a reliable and dependable way to handle childhood misbehavior. A recent and popular discipline technique is referred to as a "time-out." Although child discipline experts believe a time-out is better than spanking, some experts believe it is not an appropriate way for parents to cope with the misbehavior of their children. Moreover, the use of time-out can create subsequent childhood behavior problems. These problems can affect the well-being of the child and severely strain the parent-child relationship.

[0003] Typically, when a time-out is used, parents first firmly demand that their child stop misbehaving and be quiet. The child is then required to go and sit alone in a room, away from parents, and admonished not to come out of the room until they are sure that they can control their behavior. Being placed in time-out prolongs the time that a child must endure the frustrated need that caused their misbehavior. Thus, unmet normal needs become increasingly uncomfortable as the time-out continues. Young children depend upon, want to be with, love, and need their parents.

[0004] What exacerbates this increasingly uncomfortable state of being frustrated is the fact that the child must be alone, away from the parents who they must rely upon to meet their needs. This enforced separation from their basic source of comfort, security, and well-being adds considerably to the woe of a child. Moreover, being alone in time-out can create additional disturbing feelings that the child must endure. Painful emotions like fear and worry often develop. A frustrated child who must sit quietly and alone in time-out frequently becomes angry. Although the youngster dare not express this anger when in time-out, the child often expresses it by becoming angry and defiant sometime after being released from time-out. The practice of separating a child in time-out from parents can in itself become the cause of future misbehavior, because being alone and in time-out increases the frustrations felt by a child who is already frustrated.

[0005] Interpersonal dilemmas and conflicts are best resolved when each individual has sufficient opportunity to talk to and be heard by the other person. Modeling, initiating, and practicing the process of open dialogue is essential if a youngster is to learn healthy problem solving. Does time-out lend itself to this process? Helping children talk about how they feel, combined with parental patience, is required if children are to develop the ability to verbalize their feelings and needs rather than act them out.

[0006] For the frustrated and uncomfortable child, time-out offers enforced silence and the feeling of being rejected by one's parents. A youngster who misbehaves and then is given time-out feels hurt. This hurt, combined with the frustration that caused the youngster to misbehave, gives birth to anger. And discipline practices like time-out, which create hurt and anger, can harm a child.

[0007] A serious cost of being given time-out in childhood is the lesson that one should bottle up uncomfortable emotions. Upset in time-out and unable to express distressing feelings, youngsters desperately need to stop the painful feelings going on inside them. To cope, children learn to ignore and/or distract themselves from the energy of their hurt and angry feelings. Thus, children learn to repress their painful feelings. In the process, nervous habits emerge such as thumb sticking, fingernail biting, hair pulling, skin scratching, tugging at clothes, self-pinching, and many other similar behaviors. The purpose of these behaviors is to ward off uncomfortable feelings and, in identification with their parents' criticism of them, to punish themselves. These defense strategies serve to release anger and ignore uncomfortable feelings.

[0008] As a result, being unaware of true feelings can often become a characteristic feature of a person's life. This reduces a person's self-awareness and can affect the quality of life throughout an entire lifetime.

[0009] Thus, there is a need for an alternative disciplinary device to a time-out. Further, there is a need for a system to facilitate the modeling, initiating, and practicing of the process of open dialogue between child and child care-giver. Even further, there is a need for an apparatus and system for facilitating child discipline.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0010] The present invention is directed to an apparatus and system for facilitating child discipline including the use of a good decision chair configured to teach a child to make proper decisions and behave well. In an exemplary embodiment, the good decision chair includes a cover that hangs over an existing chair or bench. The cover includes pockets used for storing discipline aids, such as decision flags, help cards, and a music CD. The decision flags can

be labeled stop, think, and go and serve as physical tools to enable parent-child communication about correct behavior.

[0011] Briefly, one exemplary embodiment relates to an apparatus for facilitating child discipline using positive communication with a child. The apparatus includes a plurality of discipline condition indicators that facilitate disciplinary activity and a storage location for the plurality of discipline condition indicators.

[0012] Another exemplary embodiment relates to a system for facilitating child discipline using positive communication with a child. The system includes a plurality of flags representing discipline state conditions including a red flag, a yellow flag, and a green flag; a plurality of pockets corresponding to the plurality of flags providing storage locations for the plurality of flags; and a means for securing the plurality of pockets to a seating apparatus.

[0013] Yet another exemplary embodiment relates to a chair cover for use in a disciplinary session. The chair cover can include a plurality of pockets and a plurality of flags that are placed in the plurality of pockets. The plurality of flags are removed one at a time during the disciplinary session.

[0014] Other principle features and advantages of the invention will become apparent to those skilled in the art upon review of the following drawings, the detailed description, and the appended claims.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0015] Exemplary embodiments will hereafter be described with reference to the accompanying drawings.

[0016] FIG. 1 is a diagrammatic representation of a good decision chair product in accordance with a first exemplary embodiment.

[0017] FIG. 2 is a diagrammatic representation of the good decision chair product of FIG. 1 placed over a chair back in accordance with an exemplary embodiment.

[0018] FIG. 3 is a diagrammatic representation of a good decision chair product in accordance with a second exemplary embodiment.

[0019] FIG. 4 is a diagrammatic representation of the good decision chair product of FIG. 3 placed over a chair seat in accordance with an exemplary embodiment.

[0020] FIG. 5 is a diagrammatic representation of a good decision chair product in accordance with a third exemplary embodiment.

[0021] FIG. 6 is a diagrammatic representation of the good decision chair product of FIG. 5 placed over a chair back in accordance with an exemplary embodiment.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF EXEMPLARY EMBODIMENTS

[0022] FIG. 1 illustrates a good decision chair product 10 that can be used as a positive discipline tool for both children and parents. As a result of its portability, the chair product can be used in multiple locations, such as homes, schools, daycare centers, car, etc. The chair product 10 can be made of fabric and designed to lay over a chair or stool. Alternatively, the chair product 10 can be integrated into a wood or plastic chair or stool. In such an embodiment, features of the chair product are painted or somehow attached to the chair or stool. Further, the chair product 10 can be a plastic inflatable chair. Preferably, the chair product 10 is sold assembled, but in some cases the chair product 10 can be sold as a kit having separate parts that are assembled after purchase.

[0023] The chair product can be carried by a handle 12. In one exemplary embodiment, the chair product 10 has a clock logo 14. The chair product 10 can include reward cards 16 that are used when a child is showing positive behavior. The chair product 10 can also include cards with suggestions ("Help Cards") for parents to use the chair product 10 and tools accompanying the chair product 10 to their greatest advantage.

[0024] A supportive CD with an original song can be located in a pocket 18. The CD can be played in the car, at home, or while the child sits on the chair. Three colorful flags 26 are designed for the child to use to allow their parents to know what decisions they have made. In an exemplary embodiment, the following flags are included: a Red flag (for Stop), a Yellow flag (for I am Thinking), and a Green flag (for "I am ready to make "Good Decisions"). In an alternative embodiment, computer chips with pre-recorded sounds are included in the chair product 10.

[0025] The flags 26 can be located in pockets 30 that are decorated with buttons 28. Illustrations 20 and 22 can also be included. Ties 24 can be used to securely attach the chair product to a chair. For example, FIG. 2 illustrates chair product 10 attached to the back of a chair.

[0026] Parents or other caregivers can be provided with product user instructions for the chair product 10. The instructions can be general instructions, reminding users that discipline should be positive, but effective. Spanking is not used. The chair product 10 helps to teach rules and how to make good decisions, building self-worth and lasting relationships.

[0027] The Good Decision chair product 10 is designed to encourage a child to replace negative or inappropriate behavior with positive, appropriate behavior. The chair product 10 is further configured to encourage a parent or adult to correct inappropriate behavior without using physical or

demeaning verbal punishment. The following instructions are exemplary. Additional, fewer, or different instructions can be provided.

1. When a Child is not obeying the rules, the adult in charge gives the child the red flag to signal the child to stop their actions immediately or go to the "Good Decision Chair."

2. If the behavior does not stop, then the child is escorted to the chair holding the red flag where he/she is to think about what he/she has done wrong, and to learn the value of making good decisions.

3. After the adult reaffirms to the child why he/she must sit on the chair, the adult returns the red flag to its pocket and hands the child the yellow flag. The adult explains to the child that he/she is to hold the yellow flag, and "think" about his/her actions.

4. The child waves the yellow flag to let the adult know when he/she is ready to talk, and say "I'm Sorry". There is no time limit set for the child to decide when he/she is ready to talk and apologize. It is up to the child. (The CD "I STOP, I THINK, I LISTEN, may be played at this time.)

5. The adult then reinforces to the child why their behavior was unacceptable, the consequences of making negative decisions, and what action will be taken if the negative behavior is repeated. Parents may want to use the "HELP CARDS" if needed.

6. The child is then handed the Green Flag and given praise for making the right choice. The CD "I STOP, I THINK, I LISTEN, may be played at this time and the child can march with the Green Flag.

[0028] Along with the instructions for use of the chair product 10, suggestions may be included. For example:

1. Allow the child an opportunity to express his/her feelings and why he/she did not make a good decision. Discussion should be encouraged. The level of conversation may depend on the child's age.

2. Remember—sometimes children do not realize why they need to keep rules, or how their actions effect others. DO NOT: get emotional, angry, raise your voice at the child or become impatient. DO: Be patient and firm in getting a commitment from the child that his/her behavior will change before he/she is allowed to leave the chair.

3. It is important to realize that the child sets the length of his/her “thinking” time. It is amazing how honest children are with their feelings. They will let you know when they are ready to make "GOOD DECISIONS" by waving the different flags.

4. The Reward Card is to be used when a child completes a task, goes all day without having to use the chair, or is a good example to his/her brother, sister, or friends. When a child fills a card he/she is to be rewarded with a treat, special time, etc.

5. Disciplining a child can be difficult. It is easy to get upset when a child disobeys. Remember—learning to make “Good Decisions” is a life-long process. If you are frustrated with your child and feel that you could harm him/her, please get support or help from a family member or friend. Teaching right from wrong is a crucial stage in your child’s development—positive encouragement and discipline is the most important thing you can do.

6. Don’t forget the rewards for making “Good Decisions!”

[0029] A wide range of variations may be utilized. For example, FIG. 3 illustrates a chair product 40 having a seat section 42. This configuration allows the chair product 40 to be attached to the seat portion of a chair, as

illustrated in FIG. 4. Further, chair product 40 can be used with a stool that does not have a back. Positioning of the chair product and type of chair product may depend on personal preference or on the age of the child.

[0030] FIGs. 5 and 6 illustrate the chair product 10 described with reference to FIG. 1 having a personalized section for a child's name. The section may read "This chair belongs to: Jacob." The name can be added as part of a ordering process where a parent or care giver orders the chair product and asks for the chair product to be personalized. Alternatively, the name section can be empty such that the parent or caregiver can write the name of the child using a pen or marker.

[0031] While the exemplary embodiments illustrated in the Figures and described above are presently preferred, it should be understood that these embodiments are offered by way of example only. Other embodiments may include, for example, electronic sounds engaged by a button coupled to a computer chip to play when a particular flag is given to the child. Further, flags can be substituted for any of a variety of other objects, including dolls or figurines of familiar characters. The invention is not limited to a particular embodiment, but extends to various modifications, combinations, and permutations that nevertheless fall within the scope and spirit of the appended claims.